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SOLDIERS OF V CORPS' 1ST ARMORED DIVISION MIX HELPING IRAQI COMMUNITY WITH RECON MISSIONS

By Pfc. Erik LeDrew

1st Armored Division Public Affairs Office

DIWANIYA, Iraq – Reconnaissance missions are standard for any unit in a combat zone, and the armored crewmembers of V Corps' B Company, 2nd Battalion, 37th Armor Regiment, Task Force 1st Armored Division, are no exception. But the "Battle" Company troops have another job to do in this southern Iraqi city that isn't as standard -- to help its citizens solve some of their communities' problems.

The company's troops, who are attached to the 2nd Armored Cavalry Regiment, recently conducted a recon mission that was also an opportunity to find out how they could help the people of Diwaniya.



PFC ERIK LeDREW

Soldiers of V Corps' 2nd Battalion, 37th Armor Regiment, Task Force 1st Armored Division, talk with Iraqis in one of several neighborhoods they visited while on patrol in Diwaniyah.

"We conducted area reconnaissance

of about a third of our total sector in Diwaniya," said Capt. Geoffrey Wright, B Company commander. "We do this type of thing every day. Today we concentrated on finding key business locations, key leaders."

"We learned that there's a great deal of frustration among them. They're not satisfied with the public services here," he added. "Trash, for instance. It's everywhere, and people are upset about that."

Wright said he hopes to assist with some of the community problems both by looking for solutions and relaying information to others who can help.

"We're going to have to work be with (Iraqis) and the civil-military (affairs) officer with 2nd ACR to get support and funding so that we can help these people fix their problems," he explained.

Wright added that while the unit was patrolling in the city's neighborhoods, its Soldiers also stopped by several schools.

"We stopped by just to make sure (the schools) are secure, and to see if they might be being used as enemy hideouts," he said.

In addition to patrolling these neighborhoods, the company's recon also included a stop at the community's Iraqi police station to offer assistance there. While there, Wright offered to assist the station's commanding officer by having Soldiers conduct joint patrols with Iraqi police officers. That offer was quickly accepted.

"We'll go by the police stations, pick up some of the officers there, and bring them along when we go out on patrol," Wright said. "It helps us find our way around the city better, and since the (IPS) only have a limited number of vehicles, it helps them get out and work with their people. It's a benefit for both sides."

Wright's goal is to reach out and help Iraqis here, as well as to win their support in shaping their country's future.

"We're trying to win the people over in support of a future Iraq that is free and democratic and teach them to have faith in the system," he said.

